

# ILLINOIS EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL

**APRIL 19, 2004**

Stratton Building, Springfield, Illinois  
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

## MEETING MINUTES

**Present:** Martha Arntson, Gayla Boomer, Connie Brown, George Davis, Elizabeth Evans, Claudia Fabian, Brenda Holmes, Lanita Koster, Janet Maruna, Harriet Meyer, Janice Moenster, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Wanda Newell, Geoffrey Obrzut, Louanner Peters, Claudia Quigg, Luz Maria Solis, Jerry Stermer, Joyce Thomas, Judy Walker-Kendrick, Maria Whelan, Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson (for Dr. Carol Adams), Jackie Vaughn (for Barry Maram), Kay Henderson (for Janet Steiner)

**Present by phone:** Angela Ball, Rep. Elizabeth Coulson, Mark Donahue, Leo Smith

**Absent:** Ellen Alberding, Ann Alvarez, Lori Baas, Arne Duncan, Marilu Galan, Rep. Deborah Graham, Sen. Don Harmon, Irving Harris, Judy Johnson, Richard Jones, James Kaplan, Sam Meisels, Sen. Carol Ronen, Bryan Samuels, Adele Simmons, Eric Whitaker

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

### **2. Adoption of Minutes**

Council members made two amendments to the January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes:

- The minutes will list representatives that attended on behalf of Council members.
- The January minutes should reflect that Cordelia Meyer has been appointed as the co-chair of the Workforce Development Committee.

Ms. Fabian made a motion to adopt the minutes with the suggested amendments. Ms. Quigg seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote.

### **3. Announcements**

Ms. Meyer reported on a meeting between Deputy Governor Bradley Tusk, Senator Ronen, Louanner Peters, Harriet Meyer, Leo Smith, and others regarding Early Learning Council planning for universal access to quality preschool. In the meeting, Deputy Governor Tusk

reiterated the Governor's commitment and requested a plan to reach this goal. A proposed timeline was presented: legislation if needed to be introduced in 2005; initial appropriations in 2006 (FY2007); and implementation to begin in the fall of 2006.

Ms. Meyer stated that the need for parent and community input was heard at previous meetings, and a mechanism for engaging public input will be discussed at future meetings.

#### **4. Adoption of Goals and Objectives**

The complete list of goals and objectives as submitted by the committees was presented for Council consideration (see addendum). Council members raised the following questions about the document and/or committee work:

- **Workforce Development:**  
Ms. Solis suggested changing the word "implement" in Objective 2; Ms. Maruna agreed to take this suggestion back to the Committee.
- **Accountability:**  
Ms. Holmes reported that the name of the Accountability Committee has been changed to the Evaluation and Assessment Committee. Council members discussed the difference between "accountability" and the assessments of quality components and evaluation of those components, as well as the different meanings of "quality" and "quality assurance." The importance of addressing accountability was voiced, and it was agreed that quality assurance or accountability would be dealt with under the Quality Committee and a corresponding name change would be considered.
- **Parent Involvement:**  
Council members discussed the need to mention parent involvement in goals and objectives to ensure focus on the issue. Supporting diversity and respect for different cultures was also discussed as an important value to reflect in stating the Council's goals and objectives. Council members agreed to add a preamble to address the issues of family involvement, culture, and diversity, and each committee was encouraged to consider these concepts in pursuing its workplan. Ms. Boomer was selected to draft language for the preamble relating to family involvement, diversity and culture; Ounce of Prevention Fund staff were asked to draft language relating to the linkages between various committees.

Mr. Stermer moved to accept the goals and objectives; Ms. Koster seconded the motion. The Council voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

#### **5. Issues for Council Consideration**

##### **Definition of At Risk:**

Ms. Newberry Schwartz, on behalf of the Quality Committee, raised the issue of defining "at-risk" for the Council's goals relating to serving at-risk children. Council members discussed the

need to define at-risk broadly, to prioritize services to at-risk children, to utilize available federal funding for at-risk children (i.e., Head Start), and to establish criteria for services to at-risk children.

Ms. Newell encouraged a universal system that serves higher-income children together with lower-income children. Ms. Walker-Kendrick suggested that existing eligibility criteria for ISBE's State PreK program be utilized for defining at-risk for children from 3-5 and that the Executive Committee recommend a definition of at-risk for children birth to 3 years old. Mr. Stermer moved the acceptance of Ms. Walker-Kendrick's recommendation. Ms. Whelan seconded the motion, which was passed by the Council unanimously.

### **Expansion of Early Childhood Block Grant Funding**

Mr. Smith and Ms. Henderson led a discussion of the expansion of early education funding.

Ms. Henderson relayed the priorities of ISBE for new funding to the Early Childhood Block Grant: maintenance of continuing programs and a 3.3% COLA; expansion funding based on quality of proposals and the need within a district or community; 11% set-aside for 0-3 programs. Following a recent meeting with members of the Expansion Committee and Executive Committee of the Council, ISBE has also agreed to reserve a portion of the expected \$30 million increase in Block Grant funds for planning efforts to build capacity in communities in greatest need of new PreK services.

Council members commended this pilot program. Ms. Whelan moved that the Early Learning Council strongly encourage ISBE to prioritize Early Childhood Block Grant expansion funding to communities with a high proportion of unserved at-risk children, in coordination with other state and federal agencies and private organizations, and to provide targeted outreach to those communities. The motion was seconded by Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson (on behalf of Dr. Carol Adams) and was passed by the Council.

### **Recommendations from the Child Care Strategic Plan**

On behalf of the Linkage and Integration Committee, Mr. Stermer asked the Council to consider two recommendations from the Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Strategic Plan.

- **Inclusion of Children with Disabilities:**

The Child Care Strategic Plan recommended that IDHS "expand the Special Needs Add-on Rate Reimbursement program to cover all child care providers."

- **Training on Implementation of Blended Funding:**

The second recommendation of the Child Care Strategic Plan was for IDHS to "provide technical assistance and training to child care center staff to help them understand and implement programs with blended funding." The Council discussed the importance of blending funding, and how all child care providers would benefit from IDHS' assistance. Ms. Quigg suggested that the words "programs and providers" be substituted for "center staff."

Mr. Stermer moved that the Strategic Plan recommendations be adopted, with Ms. Quigg's revision. The motion was seconded by Ms. Maruna and passed by the Council.

## **6. Overview of “Ready, Set, Grow” Initiative**

A presentation on the “Ready, Set, Grow” preschool planning initiative was tabled until the next meeting.

## **7. Next Meeting**

Ms. Boomer noted that she had drafted language for the preamble, which will be sent to Council members for consideration. She distributed copies of the National PTA’s National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs and offered to do an overview at a future Council or Quality Committee meeting.

Ms. Meyer thanked the Council and the committees for all of their hard work. She reminded Council members that the next meeting will take place on July 19<sup>th</sup> in Chicago.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.